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ABSTRACT

This paper helps mainstream teachers and administrators demystify English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) education, providing techniques to help immigrant students make sense of English and their new culture. Ten chapters examine the following: (1) "We're Moving to Where?" (how it feels to move to a totally alien environment); (2) "The Essence and Isn'ts of ESL" (e.g., teaching ESL is not remedial, bilingual education, or a branch of the speech discipline); (3) "On a More Positive Note" (teaching ESL is a new profession that embraces the same principles of planning and presentation that every good teacher knows); (4) "Top Ten Teaching Tips" (e.g., prepare students for their new classmate, appoint a same-sex buddy, slow down English speech, and print rather than using cursive); (5) "An Open Letter to Learners" (with suggestions for practicing American English); (6) "Question-and-Answer Time" (e.g., whether ESL teachers learn all the different languages, learning differences, and the importance of using both the home and school language); (7) "By the Numbers Now" (learning numbers); (8) "Wit, Wisdom, Whatever" (second language learning through the eyes of philosophers, students, parents, poets, and professors); (9) "Sources, Resources, and Centers"; and (10) "After-Words." (Contains 14 resources.) (SM)

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ESL "LITE"

English as a Second Language for Teachers of *Other* Stuff

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ESL LITE

English as a Second Language

for

Teachers of Other Stuff

by

Salvatore J. Parlato

A Teacher Friendly Publication
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English isn't my language . .

English isn't your language . .

English is <u>our</u> language.

ESL LITE

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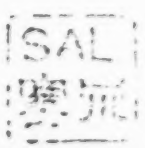
FOREWORD

Teachers of English as a Second Language talk too much. To themselves. And I'm as guilty as any of them -- maybe more. But now that ESL is here to stay, I submit ESL Lite for mainstream teachers and their administrators as a means of demystifying this still-new field of instruction.

Toward achieving that objective, this manual provides educators with information-based techniques they can start using *Monday* -- filling out the bag of tricks needed in helping our newer Americans to make sense of a most difficult language and its unfamiliar culture.

This body of professional insights surfaces from the source I know best: my own experiences as a kindergarten-to-adult practitioner--none of which work would have any validity except for the approval of my classroom colleagues and acceptance by our in-common, uncommon principals and department heads. Along this collegial path of teacher-guiding-teacher, they have kept me from getting completely turned around and lost. To those *simpaticas* and *simpaticos*, I dedicate ESL Lite, hoping that its sign-posts will guide other searchers to find their own way, too.



Salvatore J. Parlato
Irondequoit, New York

2 January 2002

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WE'RE MOVING TO--WHERE?

Let's begin with a flashback. You're nine years old. Again. You've just finished fourth grade and you're feeling great about passing with flying colors. Besides, you've made friends with most of the kids in your new class and now you're looking forward to a fun summer before returning as a seasoned fifth-grader in September. Then--*a bummer*--everything changes. You have to move. Dad is getting transferred. Somewhere called *Vuladivuh*-something-or-other.

"Vuladivok!" you practically yell at your mother when she delivers the news. "Where in the world is--how do you say it--Vadistok?"

"Vladivostok, dear. Vlad-i-vos-tok. It's in Russia, darling; eastern Russia. So far east it's closer to Tokyo than to Moscow."

Is this supposed to cheer me up? you wonder. To your young ears, the more you hear, the worse it sounds.

"Your father," continues mother, "got himself a promotion, and the company is sending him to open up a branch office there. Isn't that exciting?"

Who's she trying to kid, you scoff inwardly, *me or herself?*

"He'll make lots more money, sweetie. And won't it be fun to see that part of the world? And besides, it's only till he gets the things set up. Probably only two or three years, is all."

Only two or three years! Gads, you think, *that's like forever and a day!*

Flash-forward now. We'll skip the hurdles and hassles of selling the house, the car, and the van; storing the furniture; holding a garage-sale for things the family has to leave behind; packing and labeling boxes for the new (and much smaller)

apartment; switching credit-card companies; transferring bank accounts; getting tax questions answered; mailing change-of-address cards; and the countless other nitty-gritty arrangements that come with relocation.

But that stuff is only for the grown-ups. You have to go through the pain of goodbyes. Goodbye to your best friend Margie. Goodbye to your other buddies. Goodbye to your cousins. Hardest of all--the heartbreak of finding a new home for Two Face, your tabby animal companion for as long as you can recall.

Then there's the jet-lag ordeal of trans-Pacific airplanes, a bullet train north from Tokyo, inter-city busses, and a choppy ocean ferry from Hokkaido in northern Japan to ...

"Here we are, everybody," father announces, forcing a smile no one but mother manages to return. "Our new home--Vladivostok, Russia!"

Ugh.

Another bummer: nobody, not a single person anywhere around here speaks a word of English. And you're just as ignorant of Russian. Seeing your given names* in Cyrillic letters, you can't even be sure they're in the proper order.

Your address? At least your apartment number--424--is Arabic but the street sign on your corner is a total mystery to you.*

Your new school--its name unreadable and unpronouncible*--assigns you to fourth grade (*sheesh!*), but because some school-board members had voted to enroll you in third grade, you're actually grateful for this lesser setback.

Before meeting your teacher of RSL (Russian as a Second Language), you notice her/his name spelled out on your admission form.* But *Gads--is that a woman or a man?*

Welcome, new American girl. Welcome to the labor of learning a strange language. Welcome to the task of fitting in with the odd (to you) culture of everyone around you. Sure, the teachers and kids seem friendly enough, but--*Help! How do you say bathroom in Russian?*

*Empathy Exercise

Match the following proper names:

(1) Debbi Louise	Дэби Луиз
(2) Boris Strukov	Борис Струков
(3) Saint Sophia	Сейнт София
(4) Potemkin School	Школа Потемкина

(See answer on Credits page.)

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THE ESSENCE AND ISN'TS OF ESL

Of all educators, you'd think the English-teaching type would know better than to define something by what it's *not*. Sometimes, though, you've got to break the rules--especially when the subject is so new and changing. Based on that reasoning, let's look at this *non*-definition of Teaching ESL (TESL).

First of all, TESL is not remedial. Embracing a new language is hardly a defect to be corrected. It's a skill that's worthy of and requires help in acquiring.

Secondly, TESL is not Bilingual Education. Bilingual classes are linguistically uniform and, as such, they are conducted in Chinese for Chinese students, in Hungarian for Hungarians, and in Sign Language for deaf people. In other words, instructors use a group's native language as the basis for teaching and learning English, often for other subjects, too. By contrast, ESL classes almost always consist of different cultures. For that reason, ESL grouping is so diverse that English has to serve as *lingua franca* between teacher and class and among students as well.

Thirdly, although TESL has many good techniques in common with the discipline of Speech, it is not a branch of that profession. The two fields differ, for example, in their approach to pronunciation. While an American girl or boy may benefit from the error-correction technique of repeat-after-me drills, TESL teachers recognize dialect or accent as a normal part of language acquisition; for the most part, they disregard and accept minor peculiarities of palate.

Fourthly, language is not learned; it is acquired. Many of us <u>learned</u> French, German, or Latin. In so doing, we studied word lists, chanted *la-plume-de-ma-tante* pattern drills, and memorized

the rules and exceptions of grammar. Going by the book, some of us even mastered the five plural forms of German. But is that the way we acquired English? Did your mother plop you down in your high chair one day and say: "Today, child, you're going to learn adverbs. Tomorrow we'll do the future tense. After that, it's preposition time." No, we acquired English *communicatively*, that is, by decoding wants, needs, and emotions--our own as well as others'. Phrase by meaningful phrase, we announced our personal priorities and urgencies: food, drink, toys, pets, games, candy, diaper changes, and potty.

The same process holds true--in Japanese or Javanese, Hebrew or Urdu.

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ON A MORE POSITIVE NOTE

Putting aside all those *nays, nyets,* and *no-nos,* we still haven't defined Teaching English as a Second Language. As our jumping-off point, here's one (admittedly my own) version:

TESL is a new profession that
via a variety of ways
and based on concepts of interest or/and
importance to learners
seeks to produce an in-English understanding
of American life and language.

Here are those points again, one by one:

TESL is a new profession. Its lineage dates back to the early twentieth century when it was known as "Americanization." During that pioneering period, Americanizing focused on helping immigrants pass history-heavy citizenship tests. In the more enlightened days following World War II, the process became more functional and job-oriented, but the thrust was still adult-ward. The result? School-age children found themselves in the sink-or-swim setting of mainstream classrooms or--worse--within programs for disabled students. Either way, these newest Americans lacked the targeted support of English-dedicated instruction.

What turned TESL around? The Kennedy-era Peace Corps. As volunteers returned home during the mid-late 1960's, they brought with them the trial-and-error ways of teaching English to Third

World populations. In applying their new expertise to pockets of need within our own borders, these social innovators provided the impetus for the development of ESL as a separate discipline. By the early-to-middle 1970's, ESL teachers were being trained, departments formed, and associations organized. Critical to this growth were the texts and leadership of such trail-blazers as Marquardt, Mary Finocchiaro, Harold B. Allen, and Laubach--the axiomatic "right people at the right time."

A variety of ways. TESL boasts no magic formula. It embraces the same principles of planning and presentation that every good teacher knows and uses: the lively sharing of information via conventional means plus goal-directed technology and hands-on exercises. Nor does TESL espouse any single dogma. However, of several prevalent styles, Steven Krashen's Natural Approach has won many advocates. The rationale behind that philosophy leads logically to ...

Concepts of interest or/and importance to learners. Would memorizing our alphabet engage an Ethiopian six-year-old? Neither would her barely literate mother find much fascination in the works of Hawthorne or Hemingway. Closer to the kindergartner's interests is the task of fitting plastic ABCs into compatible slots or matching the colors and numbers in a deck of UNO cards. As for Mom, according to the late Brazilian humanist-researcher Paulo Freire, she--even early in English acquisition--benefits most not from analyzing poetry or fiction, but from deciphering discount coupons, want-ad abbreviations, or the legalese of her rental contract.

An in-English understanding. The idea of teaching English *in English* isn't as redundant as it sounds, because it involves the choice of language that separates TESL from Bilingual Education. This distinction doesn't claim that one approach is better than the other; only that the two differ in medium. You've already seen, and may want to take another look at, the comparison of BE and TESL in Chapter 1. Add to that explanation the note that, understandably, the controversy between those schools of thought and practice is sometimes as emotional as it is pedagogical.

American life and language are symbiotic, The mastery of American English calls for more than such arbitrary tasks as memorizing word-lists, labeling parts of speech, or diagramming sentences. No. Vocabulary introduced to the ESL learner ought to be conveyed within a context related to things American. The name *Rudolph* has special meaning during the Christmas season. And at any time of the year, so do baseball idioms ("He's a foul ball"). Expressions like that, familiar to natives, can bewilder early learners of American English when still strangers to our music, sports, and other facets of life in the USA. Culture--what we grew up with--is vital to vocabulary.

***

This home-made definition of mine may enable you and your ESL colleagues to understand the needs of your New Americans. But beyond those insights, what can Svetlana, Carlos, Thieu, Kareem, and Deepa--especially if adults--do for *themselves*? Some self-help suggestions for them follow, right after a few pointers for teachers-in-the-trenches. Next.

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TOP TEN TEACHING TIPS

Since *Top Ten* lists show up so often nowadays, here's one for classroom teachers with an ESL learner to reach.

1. Prepare your students for their new classmate. Before s/he even enters your classroom, make a fuss. Let your regulars know something about her/his nationality and language. Role-play how scary it must be to start school in a completely different country. Check out the ESL-er's flag in an almanac, and have your class draw color versions of it; post their copies in your room, in the hallway, and near the school office. Look up her/his First Language words for *Hello, How Are You,* and *Welcome;* write them phonetically on the chalkboard; teach your students to say them.

2. Appoint a same-sex "buddy" for survival situations. S/he can show your newcomer the bathroom and the nurse's office, help to make lunch choices, and guide her/him to the right bus. To keep this job from becoming a burden for any one student, rotate. Make it a matter of privilege and pride. Because it is.

3. Don't force your ESL-er to talk. Speaking up, whether one-on-one or in group recitation, can be stressful at first, because of self-consciousness or the risk of making mistakes. When s/he is ready to talk, you'll get plenty of response. In the meantime, this *Silent Period* is far from unproductive. Keeping quiet allows language learners to absorb new sounds, match them up with reality, and to play them back internally until able to try using them out loud--just as you and I did in learning English, too.

4. Slow down your English, at least when addressing her/him. Do you recall the times when words in another language entered your ears like one huge sentence? Well, ESL learners face the same problem. So use empathy. Exaggerate. Frame your speech, as naturally as you can, into distinctly separate words.

5. Meet with their parents or guardians. Because some cultures consider it intrusive to tread onto a teacher's domain, you may have to make a special effort to assure care-givers that they're welcome as part of the teaching/learning team. To make that dialog possible, you may need an interpreter. This "human hearing-aid" will put foreign-born adults at ease, especially when faced with technical terminology you sometimes can't avoid. Your principal or ESL department can usually arrange for finding and funding qualified interpreters.

6. Give her/him a class job. Something hands-on like erasing the chalkboard, closing and opening windows, handing out papers, or running the VCR. It's a self-esteem thing. Feeling useful.

7. Print. Don't use cursive on your chalkboard or overhead. Instead, block-print such information as the daily schedule, chapter headings, key vocabulary, and homework assignments. In the beginning stages, clarity is key; style and form can wait.

8. Visualize whenever you can. Look for captioned versions of your usual videos. To your bag of tricks, add study prints, over-size photos, and magazine graphics. Improvise sign-language and sketching as short-cuts to complex or abstract concepts.

9. Cooperate with your ESL colleague. And expect the favor in return. After all, you all have the same objective: to get Ivan and Yelena "up to speed" as quickly as their abilities allow. Disagree on tactics? Mutual respect smooths out many a bumpy path. At any crossroad, *collusion is better than collision.*

10. Keep it simple--your own vocabulary, that is. In communicating with ESL-ers, there's no need to distort your language, but when conversing or giving instructions, use the short and punchy options of good old American English. Streamline your ESL dialogs--at least at first--by preferring:

IF instead of provided that
BOOK instead of text
EASY instead of convenient
FIND instead of locate
TRY instead of attempt
SKILL instead of knack

WHEN instead of as soon as
TV instead of television
HOPE instead of expectation
WORK instead of employment
SPORTS instead of athletics
PLACE instead of spot.

Two of my favorite substitutes: ABOUT instead of *in terms of*
and EVERY DAY instead of *on a daily basis.*

But, you may be wondering, *won't all this baby talk keep beginners from building up their English vocabulary?* Not really, because in the earlier stages of ESL, concept-building outranks semantic footwork. Finer points can wait till later.

BONUS

Many ESL students(especially adults)
can do a lot *for* themselves
and *by* themselves.
See how. As promised.
Next.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO LEARNERS

Dear Student of ESL,

If you know English well enough to read this letter, here are some ideas for practicing American English. No extra classes, no homework, no dictionaries, and--best of all--no tests!

-- *Talk with Americans whenever you can.* Speaking is the most important way of communicating; it can also be the most difficult. Why? Because nobody likes to make mistakes in front of other people. But that's how we *all* learned our first language, and that's how we can learn a new language, too. So, use your English with Americans as often as you can: between classes, over the telephone, or on the bus. Maybe you'll have to be the first one to speak, but the more you talk, the easier it will become.

-- *Ask people from "the old country" to help you.* They know what it's like to learn English, and in practicing together, there's no reason not to use your old language to help you with this new one.

-- *Practice your English with neighborhood children,* If you don't feel ready to speak with older Americans, talk to youngsters. They speak in short sentences, they use easy words, and they don't talk very fast. For kids, language can be a game, not the serious business we grown-ups make of it.

-- *Watch good TV programs and videos.* Television and video can sometimes be a waste of time. But so is soccer, bicycling, the Internet, or anything else that we do too often. But "picture

power" lets you see and hear American English on the news, Oprah Winfrey, and other good talk-shows. Children's programs like *Sesame Street* and *Barney*, are worthwhile, too. Those shows will be extra useful if they include captions (or subtitles) at the bottom of the movie screen or TV picture. Those printed words let you hear spoken English while seeing them *at the same time*. Even commercials can be educational.

-- *Listen to the radio, especially the news*. That's how the actor Sidney Poitier, as a young Jamaican, learned to speak English so well. Singers like Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand are good musical examples of how to pronounce certain words. If you can't find their songs on the radio, borrow some CDs or audiotapes from your public library.

-- *Read the funny papers*. Newspaper comic-strips may not always make you laugh, but they do use easy English and plenty of pictures. The Sunday "funny papers" are the best because they use color and larger pictures. Even in black and white, though, the "funnies" tell their stories in words and cartoons together. Also, humor tells you something about American people and life. Teachers read *Cathy*, *Hagar*, and *Hi & Lois*, too -- just for fun.

I hope that these ideas will help you to improve and to enjoy American English. If I were in *your* country and trying to learn *your* language, I'd follow these suggestions, too!

Good luck!

A Teacher of English
as a Second Language

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QUESTION-AND-ANSWER TIME

Because there's still more TESL "stuff" for us to share, the Q&A way may be best for filling in the blanks. The questions are few but, I hope, representative enough to satisfy your curiosity, your interests, and even your favorite gripes.

Q. HOW DO ESL TEACHERS LEARN ALL THOSE DIFFERENT LANGUAGES?
A. They don't. An ESL class is a virtual United Nations. Vesna is from Yugoslavia and speaks Macedonian. Liu Chao comes from Taiwan, so she speaks Chinese. Victor, from the Dominican Republic, speaks Spanish. Deepa comes from India, and she speaks Gujarati; Manjit is from India, too, but he speaks Punjabi. How many linguists--much less we (mostly) monolingual teachers--can function in all those tongues? Even if we could, how would our students communicate with each other? All this diversity, in itself, reflects TESL's main mission: to nurture an inter-active and common language that New Americans can use in securing their English-speaking future.

Q. MY GREAT-GRANDPARENTS EMIGRATED FROM THE OLD COUNTRY AND THEY LEARNED ENGLISH PERFECTLY WELL ON THEIR OWN. WHY DO TODAY'S SCHOOLS HAVE TO MAKE SUCH A BIG DEAL ABOUT ESL PROGRAMS?
A. Helping immigrants assimilate is nothing new. Since the late 19th century, our public schools have offered special programs for absorbing newcomers into society. In recent years, though, there's been such a bulge of New Americans that the mega-numbers

demand we speed up their integration. What good would it be in other parts of our system today if we insisted on sticking with the ways of the past? We'd still be watching black-and-white TV, driving stick-shift cars, and using home computers that take up a warehouse instead of a lap.

Q. KARA LEARNED ENGLISH IN TWO YEARS, BUT HER BROTHER KARO--AFTER THREE-AND-A-HALF YEARS--IS STILL STRUGGLING. WHAT'S WRONG?
A. Nothing. It's a matter of individual differences. See below.

Q. HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO LEARN SECOND-LANGUAGE ENGLISH?
A. The ballpark figure is more like a Super Dome. It takes 1-1/2 to 7 years for any given ESL-er to reach academic parity with born-here classmates. The variables are (as you know only too well) the usual suspects: age at start of acquisition, prior study of English or other foreign language, cultural an linguistic parallels with their first language, the quality and frequency of ESL services and mainstream instruction, related school/community facilities, home influence, personal motivation, and intellectual aptitude. In other words, whether picking up Math, Music, or Mandarin, some of us are quicker than others.

Q. MIGUEL PRONOUNCES *J* LIKE *Y,* AND MIGUELITA'S *B* SOUNDS LIKE *V.* HOW WILL THEY EVER *SPELL* ENGLISH WORDS IF THEY CAN'T *SAY* THEM?
A. Henry Kissinger's native tongue was German. Still, after coming here in his teens, he mastered English, went to Harvard, earned a PhD, wrote several important books, and became a famous Secretary of State. For all of Dr. Kissinger's public years, his *V* sounded like *a W* and vice versa, while his *and* sounded more like *und.* There's no record of Dr. K's having had a problem with spelling. Either in English or in German.

Q. WHAT GOOD IS IT FOR ESL STUDENTS TO STUDY ENGLISH IN SCHOOL AND THEN KEEP USING THEIR OLD LANGUAGE AT HOME? DOESN'T THAT WIPE OUT OR AT LEAST SLOW DOWN THEIR PROGRESS?

A. We want ESL-ers to *loosen* their tongues, not *lose* them. After struggling all day long learning Language Two, they need a mental and emotional break. Besides, use of the home-language exposes ESL students to informal but nonetheless valuable assests of language *per se*, information-gathering, social amenities, native folklore, plus the related benefits of ethnic pride and--yes--self esteem. Given that input within the comfort of their own linguistic circle, an ESL-er can come to realize, "Hey--I'm just as smooth, smart, and funny as anyone else." For that reason alone, Language One should be encouraged, not down-graded.

Q. ANTONIA SPEAKS IDIOMATICALLY DURING GYM, LUNCH, AND RECESS. WHY CAN'T SHE READ AND WRITE AS EASILY?

A. In any language, oral and listening skills are the first to develop. Because most conversation is social, an ESL learner can manipulate it fairly well. But classroom content is more precise, therefore demanding greater depth of vocabulary. And we know that the active (as opposed to passive) processes of reading and writing take longer to master in any language, a discrepancy that's greater in English because of its non-congruence between verbal and written expression. Example: take the compound vowel EA. By my count, EA has 10--that's right, ten--pronunciations in English. Five of them are *head, bead, great, bear,* and *earth.* Can you come up with the others? See the answer--or add your own findings-- on the bottom of the Credits page.

XXX

BY THE NUMBERS NOW ...

Back now to Debbi Louise. Or rather, to you *as* Debbi Louise.

There you are, in Vladivostok, confused and culture-shocked. Just the same, you make up your mind to conquer the sounds and Cyrillic characters of Russian. Consulting with your parents, you all decide that, for survival data like your new address and 7-digit telephone, you should start with the numbers. *After all,* you yourself reason, *how hard can it be to count from one to ten?*

All right then, Debbi, here's a pop quiz for you. Given the phonetics and figures right in front of you, say them out loud a couple of times--just to get acquainted. Then give yourself five minutes to learn them by heart. (Do the math: that's only two numbers per minute. And at least the digits look the same as your good old "American" ones.)

1 один uh-DEEN one
2 два DVAH two
3 три TREE three
4 четыре chi-TEE-ree four
5 пять PYAHT five
6 шесть SHEST six
7 семь SYEM seven
8 восемь VAW-sim eight
9 девять DYEHV-yit nine
10 десять DYEHSS-yit ten

How did you do? Not exactly a breeze, was it? Except for *three/TREE,* none of those number-words was anywhere nearly like English or any other language most of us know. But this was only your first stab. Maybe you'll do better on long-term recall. Try again tomorrow.

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The point is, of course, if you had trouble "acing" this exercise, consider your frustration a toe-in-the water sample of the mental sweat involved in absorbing (much less *mastering*) Russian as a Second Language.

Welcome to the Strange New World of Second Language Learning.

Post-Test

Quick now--without looking: How do you say *Six* in Russian?

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WIT, WISDOM, WHATEVER

Some things just can't be done by the numbers, so let's do away with structure here. Instead, let's look at ESL through more random eyes: sages from China and Greece, high-school and college students, a ring-less married mother, poets, and professors. This mix of minds and emotions reflects the fun and the frustration, the mystery and the misery of absorbing a new way of living and languaging in American English.

It takes seven to eleven years in a second language
to develop the ability to manipulate
the written language of English.

Adrienne Okin
Arcata CA (1992)

*

Your language is your culture,
your most intimate possession
outside of your secrets.

Robert MacNeil Wordstruck

Never discourage anyone
who, no matter how slowly,
continually makes progress,

Plato

*

The First Language becomes a scaffold from which to build the Second--
the two developing in tandem, building a bridge between family and school.

Leah Hager Train Go Sorry (1994)

*

I BEEN RUDE SINCE I COME TO TIS COUNTRY

In 1966
when we liv in Brooklyn
I walk across a street
to te ospital
to have my firs dawter.
I see many white faces
around te bed,
students of medicin.

Te doctor scole me for
not wearing weding ring.
People will talk, he say.
My husband go to Sears and
buy weding ring
stainless steel.

When my husband at work
I carry my dawter in a basket
and go to te laundry mat.
I not talk to no one.
But tis woman come up to me
and she yel at me--
My Son Die In Vietnam!
I say noding becawse
I not want her to lose face.
You see -- I from Thailand.

I been rude
since I come to tis country.

-- Chanika Svetvilas: Skidmore College Multicultural Newsletter

*

In the schools I would be told I was not in my country, that I had to speak English. I was slowly being robbed of my identity. I was always afraid to say something. I felt a great fear of being the center of redocule (sic) and I had feelings of shame. I felt I could never compete with others. It had always been difficult for me to go into a classroom because I flet (sic) I was being laughed at.

An ESL High School Student; 1997

*

Tell me, I forget.
Show me, I remember.
Involve me, I understand. Chinese Proverb

*

ENGLISH AS A *SICKENED* LANGUAGE

In a Bucharest Hotel Lobby
The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time, we regret that we will be unbearable.

In a Tokyo Hotel
It is forbidden to steal hotel towels, please. If you are not a person to do such a thing.

At the Copenhagen Airport
We take your bags and send send them in all directions.

At a Moscow Hotel
If this is your first visit to Russia, you are welcome to it.

At an Athens Hotel
Visitors are expected to complain at the office between 9-11 AM daily.

At a Rhodes (Greece) Tailor Shop
Order your summer suit. Because of the big rush, we will execute all customers in a strict rotation.

An AIR FRANCE Item

*

Conventional spelling in English is, in itself, anything but conventional. In fact, it is convoluted, improvised, and arbitrary.
(Dr. Yetta Goodman Univ/Arizona, 1994)

Many scholars believe that a second language is learned not so much by direct instruction as by using the language in meaningful contexts.
(Dr. Bernard A. Mohan U/Brit. Columbia, 1986)

*

In Iran, I thought all Americans were white and only of European ancestry. This was a fascinating experience for me to learn otherwise, and it changed my perception about the United States. I started seeing this country as a world in itself with a complete mix of nationalities and opportunities for all.

Farid Bozorgi (1947-1990) Graduate/Nat'l Tech Inst for the Deaf

*

Second-Language Stages
(S.J.P.)

Cipher
Silent Worried
Observing Thinking Gesturing
Friends Teachers Television Books
Chatting Joking Arguing
Relaxed Focused
Scholar

*

Studies show that more correction does not mean better language acquisition. Children acquire their first or second language when they understand messages or obtain what Steven Krashen (1981) calls *comprehensible input*.. Error correction is simply not enough without clear and meaningful explanation. (Andrews/Covell:Deaf American Monograph 1993)

*

English is a simple but difficult language, consisting entirely of foreign words that are mispronounced. (Kurt Tucholsky: c.1939)

*

Research shows that children learn language best in a low-risk environment in which they are permitted and encouraged to test hypotheses of interest to them.

Dr. Jerome Harste
International Reading Association
1989

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If you come to another country where you are going to earn a living, it is an act of love, appreciation, and responsibility to learn the language of that country. (Rita Moreno, 1993)

*

The curriculum is so much necessary raw material
but warmth is a vital element for the growing plant
and for the soul of a child.

CARL JUNG

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PLAYLET

Scene: An advanced (possibly too advanced) ESL class

Student: Teacher, please explain the correct use of *The*.

Teacher: Well, for one thing, *The* is not used with a proper noun. For example, we don't say *the* Russia or *the* Mexico.

Student: But we always say *the* United States of America.

Teacher: True, because *the* can be used with a modifier, as in *the* Middle East and *the* Sahara Desert.

Student: Then how come we don't say "*the* East Asia" and "*the* North America?"

Finis: THE LESSON ENDS ABRUPTLY AS THE GLASSY-EYED INSTRUCTOR SIGHS DEEPLY, BREAKS INTO A SWEAT, AND TAKES A SEAT, TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF A WILDLY SPINNING CLASSROOM.

John F. Mocine, Los Angeles City College (1970)

*

Our fate as language teachers is always to adapt. We are like carpenters, ever building and building. We try the impossible, knowing we will fail. But in daring the impossible, we claim this destiny as our own.

Dale T. Griffee: English Teaching Forum (USIA), April 1986

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SOURCES, RESOURCES, AND CENTERS

Beyond the perils of Debbi Louise, the Top Ten Tips, and other TESL tidbits, lots more help lies at your digital fingertips. The virtual army of non-profits listed here stands ready to serve you, their organizational names describing their function or clientele. Most of them distribute ESL-related books and periodicals, and some have local affiliates, identified upon request.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
(AAACE) 1200-19th Street NW, Washington DC 20036
Tel 202 429 5131 --- www.albany.edu/aaace

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS (AFT)
555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Washington DC 20001
Tel 202 879 4400 --- www.aft.org

ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT
(ASCD) 1703 North Beauregard Street, Alexandria VA 22311
Tel 703 578 9600 or 800 933 ASCD --- www.ascd.org

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT (ASTD)
Box 1443, 1630 Duke Street, Alexandria VA 22313
Tel 703 683 8100 --- www.astd.org

ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS IN ESL (ATESL)
National Association of Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA)
1307 New York Avenue NW, Washington DC 20005
Tel 202 737 3699 --- www.inbox@nafsa.org

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE/LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS (ERIC/CLL)
Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
4646-40th Street NW, Washington DC 20016
Tel 202 362 0700 or 800 276 9834 --- Fax 202 362 3740
www.cal.org/ericcll

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BILINGUAL EDUCATORS (NABE)
1220 "L" Street NW, Washington DC 20005
Tel 202 898 1829 --- www.nabe.org

NATIONAL CENTER FOR ESL LITERACY EDUCATION (NCLE)
Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
4646-40th Street NW, Washington DC 20016
Tel 202 362 0700 --- Fax 202 363 7204 --- www.cal.org/ncle

NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION (NCBE)
2121 "K" Street NW, Washington DC 20037
Tel 202 467 0867 --- www.ncbe.edu

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH (NCTE)
English International Division
1111 West Kenyon Road, Urbana IL 61801
Tel 217 328 3870 or 800 369 6283 --- www.ncte.org

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NEA)
1201-16th Street NW, Washington DC 20036
Tel 202 833 4000 --- www.nea.org

OFFICE/BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND MINORITY LANGUAGE AFFAIRS
(OBEMLA) US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave.SW
Washington DC 20202 www.ed.gov/offices/OBEMLA
Tel 202 205 5463 --- Fax 202 205 8737

SOCIETY/INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND RESEARCH
(SIETAR) PO Box 67, Pultney VT 05346
Tel 802 387 4785 --- www.sietarinternational.org

TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES, INC.
(TESOL) 700 South Washington Street, Alexandria VA 22314
Tel 703 518 2513 --- Fax 800 329 4469 --- www.tesol.edu

YOUR OWN LOCAL, STATE, OR REGIONAL ESL ORGANIZATIONS:

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AND IN VLADIVOSTOK: _____

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After-Words

CENTURY NINETEEN was in its 80's and Carmelo in his teens when first setting ill-shod foot on Buffalo's Italian ghetto. There the Palermo-born immigrant plunged right into the struggle for survival, taking on whatever odd jobs he could find, communicating with the *Americani* any way possible, mostly via improvised sign-and-body language.

Before long, he mastered job-market English along with bootstrap economics. Later, in almost Horatio Alger-like progress, my grandfather started up a small pasta plant, and by middle age, he became one of the city's most prosperous businesspersons. He sat on the board of a bank (the one he co-founded), escorted tenor Enrico Caruso on a personal tour of Niagara Falls, raised a family of six children, and (male-chauvinistically by today's standards) put all three of his sons through college.

To this day Carmelo Gugino's name survives in bronze on the plaque identifying the directors of the US-Canada Peace Bridge dedicated in 1927 by the Prince of Wales, who later became King Edward V. Well into his old age, Papa remained an active member of his family, neighborhood, and community.

Was my grandfather just another transplanted over-achiever? Maybe. But the central question is, Could he have accomplished so much without knowing English? Without being able to dialog with so many different segments of his new American world? And beyond his own success, could his eldest son Frank have become a lawyer without mastering English? Lacking that occupational *Open Sesame*, could Uncle Frank have been elected to the New York State legislature? *For thirteen consecutive terms?*

Sure, much of my uncle's constituency was Italian-American, but not enough to re-elect him year after year. For that to happen, he had to relate to *all* of the voters: the Sullivans, Hoffmans, Beauchampses, Buttons, Longboats, and Webers (actual west-side families). Diverse as they might have been in origin, politics, and religion, this potpourri of people all shared one crucially unifying element: English.

Of broader and more recent impact today are New Americans who, in their struggle for assimilation, face even harder high-tech trials. Because so many of them come from lands unfamiliar with our Western ways and alphabet, American life and language are all the more difficult for them to absorb. And isn't that what TESL is all about: putting our newest citizens on an equal social/monetary footing with the rest of us? As quickly and as lastingly as possible?

In helping our ESL-ers fulfill their potential, let's look back on the model of earlier arrivees to our shores. Without abandoning their original languages or cultures, they adopted American English as their own. Now--whether teacher or taught--it's our turn to pass it on for this generation to do same.

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Credits

Cover graphic: United States Department of Agriculture; Dr. Joy Kreeft Peyton, NCLE/Center for Applied Linguistics; Dr. Robert Hunter, Monroe Community College, Rochester NY; Dr. Rhona Genzel, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT); and elsewhere identified: Air France, Dr. Jean F. Andrews, the late Farid Bozorgi, John A. Covell, Dr. Yetta Goodman, Dale T. Griffee, Leah Hager, Dr. Jerome Harste, Robert MacNeil, John F. Mocine, Dr. Bernard A. Mohan, Rita Moreno, Adrienne Okin, Plato, Chanika Svetvilas, and the late Kurt Tucholsky; colleagues from the Greece (NY) Central School District and Language Intelligence Ltd. of Rochester, NY.

* * *

ANSWERS

FROM CHAPTER ONE: The matching names fall in the same order.

FROM CHAPTER SIX: Other "EA" pronunciations are *heart, area, create, sergeant,* and (arguably) *beau.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Semi-retired after teaching k-to-adult ESL in Greece (NY), Salvatore Parlato now tutors commercially for Language Intelligence Ltd in nearby Rochester.

Besides compiling the directories *All About ESL, The ESL Locator,* and *Watch Your Language...in Captions,* Sal also wrote the reader-text *America A-Z: Language and Landmarks.*

On the side, he composes (and occasionally publishes!) the hard-sell product of poetry -- an exercise that has become for him "the literary equivalent of singing in the shower."